

Remarks of Indiana Lt. Governor Becky Skillman at the Purdue Ag Fish Fry

We are holding the annual Fish Fry on such a huge weekend in Indianapolis, I thought we might call this event “The Grouper Bowl,” but we’re serving perch.

This is my 10th consecutive Fish Fry and my last as Lt. Governor and Indiana’s Secretary of Agriculture. I look across this crowd today and know I am blessed by so many friendships. And Indiana is blessed to have such rich agricultural resources, not the least of which is the passionate alumni of Purdue.

It is always a pleasure to be with my friend, President France Cordova. We were able to grab lunch when she was in Indy for the press conference to announce the balanced trimester plan. I congratulate and commend the University for providing more educational opportunities for our students, in addition to boosting your own revenues.

And we have no better champions for agriculture than Senator Richard Lugar and Congressman Mike Pence. They understand that agriculture is not only an important part of our state’s heritage; it is a critical part of our state’s economic future.

We come to this annual event to be with our many partners in agriculture. At the State Department of Agriculture, we work everyday to make Indiana agriculture the best it can be. We know Indiana can be a global leader in the innovation and commercialization of food, fiber and fuel. The state does not have a better partner than Purdue as we work toward that goal.

And we are making progress. Since we met last year, we’ve made gains in soil and water conservation, and in the development of alternative energy and biofuels. The gains in economic development through agriculture are particularly impressive. We have grown to more than 208,000 agribusinesses in this state, with a payroll alone at \$2.4 billion, and that doesn’t include farms and farm workers. As you know, agriculture continues to be an important part of our state’s economic development plans.

To realize forward movement, we appreciate our great working relationship with Purdue Extension, the State Chemist Office, and other divisions that perform regulatory functions for the state.

And I have so enjoyed having representatives of Purdue join me on agricultural trade missions around the globe as we work to bring home more opportunities for the industry. When we visit other countries, we know just how fortunate we are to have a strong agricultural industry and abundant, affordable food. The world is depending on the agricultural industry to thrive and grow. That presents agriculture with huge responsibilities and challenges to conquer.

I know the leadership at the Purdue School of Agriculture is up to the challenge. Jay Akridge gets it. I have enjoyed his counsel and our working relationship through the years.

And I delighted in presenting the state’s 2011 AgriVision Award to your own Vic Lechtenberg, during the State Fair. This award goes to an Indiana resident who has shown exemplary leadership to maximize our potential and secure Indiana’s future as a world leader in agricultural production. You must know that he’s beloved statewide.

And I thank Purdue for the assistance with our National Guard Agribusiness Development Teams. We have Hoosier soldiers and servicemen and women from 11 other states that train in Indiana to be deployed to Afghanistan. These team members work with local farmers in Afghanistan and help them get past many of their challenges. About 80 percent of Afghanistan depends on agriculture for their livelihood. So, essentially, we are using agriculture as a peacemaker in addition to fulfilling our responsibility to help feed the world.

I thank you for all you do in the fields, in the classroom, in our communities, and around the world.
Thanks for all you do and All Hail Purdue!